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TREASURER SAYS KEEP INVESTING IN HOOSIER COLLEGE PROGRAM

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Many people might be afraid to invest in the stock market right now, but Indiana Treasurer Richard Mourdock - a former Vanderburgh County commissioner - says it's the right time to start investing to save for your children's college education, and changes in Indiana's college savings plan can help.

"I really was afraid with the way things are right now with the stock market that a lot of people were going to pull in their horns, so to speak, and not invest," said Mourdock, who also chairs the Indiana Education Savings Authority.

However, he hasn't seen that. Currently, about 124,000 individual investment accounts have been set up through Indiana's **CollegeChoice** savings program, he said, and about 85,000 of those belong to Hoosiers.

Like many of those out-of-state investors, Hoosiers have the option of investing in other state's plans. However, as an incentive for Indiana residents to invest in the state's program, participating Indiana taxpayers are eligible for a state income tax credit of 20 percent of their annual contributions to the plan. That equals up to a \$1,000 credit per year.

Indiana recently changed from J.P. Morgan to Upromise Investments to manage its plans. The result will make Indiana's

college savings program, previously ranked as one of the most expensive for investors, one of the least costly plans in the country, Mourdock said. Upromise administers college savings plans in 13 states.

The program offers two plans, one for individuals investing on their own and one for those who wish to invest with the assistance of a financial adviser. This year, for the first time, it also offers individuals the opportunity to manage and even start plans using the Internet.

The money from the savings plans isn't just for a traditional bachelor's degree, either. In fact, Mourdock said, Indiana needs more people with focused, associate-degree job training in the work force right now.

"It can apply to any type of post-high school education that requires some type of certification," he said.

The plans also have an "age-based" option that lets investors choose a custom package of stocks that will be ready to generate tuition income for their children at just the right time.

All they need to do is plug in the age of their child at the time they are beginning to save, Mourdock said.

And it is never too early to start saving for college, or anything, Mourdock said.

"Americans are terrible at savings. We are very good at spending. That is part of the reason we are in this situation. People got easy credit as opposed to really saving. We encourage everyone to save," he said.